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# THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING

VOL. XVI

NOVEMBER, 1915

No. 2

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## EDITORIAL COMMENT

### HOW TO DEAL WITH UNJUST CRITICISM

Every little while we have letters of protest from our readers, urging the JOURNAL to come out in condemnation of some misrepresentation or unwise and unfair criticism published in other magazines or made by speakers at various times and in many places. There are two reasons for our not giving space to replies to this kind of criticism.

First, because the readers of such journals would not be reached by our reply, as they are naturally not readers of a journal of this class. Such protests from individuals should be sent directly to the magazines in which the contributions have appeared, by those who resent it. For instance, we are quite sure our editorial in the September issue on *The Nurse in Fiction* will carry little weight with *McClure's Magazine*, but if 500 nurses who are subscribers to that magazine were to write a letter of protest to the editor, especially if they were to withdraw their subscriptions, we might expect to see such stories as *Miss Smith of Bellevue* eliminated from that monthly.

Second, if we were to devote our efforts to combatting this kind of criticism, everything else would be completely overshadowed, because unfair criticism of the nursing body, based either on ignorance or malice, is continuous.

When this JOURNAL was being established it was agreed that its policy should be one of education rather than criticism. We have, during the years that have passed, with few exceptions, held to this course, devoting our efforts and our space to the education of nurses throughout the world to the need of higher ideals, better education, greater facilities for hospital preparation and the necessity of securing legal protection from the state, that nursing might be brought to a proper degree of efficiency, that the sick, in whatever station of life,

might receive the most efficient and intelligent nursing care possible. Our critics do not seem to grasp the idea that the reason for the great organized movement among nurses for higher education and state registration is to overcome the very defects for which they are criticised, defects for which they are not originally responsible, but which they alone can remedy. The inadequacy of the training given in many hospitals, the lack of educational standards, the selection of unfit women, that hospital work may be done cheaply, the lack of coöperation and support from physicians and hospital managers and too often from members of their own profession have led to the very conditions for which these same people now criticise the nursing profession as a whole.

Many of those nurses who are striving most zealously for standards of higher education for nurses are women who in their years of struggle have felt themselves to be handicapped by the lack of better preparation and who are endeavoring to fix such standards that the women who are to follow them in the profession shall not be hampered by the same limitations. This holds true in the development of education in every country and in every profession, it is not peculiar to the nursing body.

In the face of ignorant and malicious criticism from the press, in spite of opposition from members of the medical profession who should be with us, of commercial competition, of the weakness of our own members, the combined efforts of the nurses of this country for reform in hospitals, not only in the teaching of pupils but in the care of patients, and for improvement in the class of women admitted to training schools, are bringing about a general uplift of the whole status of nursing in the world as is proven by this criticism from individuals and organizations whose selfish ends are being defeated.

#### THE MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL REUNION

The Alumnae Association of the Massachusetts General Hospital held a very interesting reunion of all the graduates, at the hospital, on September 13 and 14, invitations to which were sent to graduates all over the world by the trustees of the hospital, inviting those at a distance to be the guests of the hospital during the two days' period. The entire proceedings of this gathering will be printed in the *Alumnae Quarterly* and those who are specially interested will read the account there. The most interesting feature of this celebration was the presence of three of the past superintendents, Linda Richards, who took charge of the school at the end of its first year of existence, Anna C. Maxwell and Pauline L. Dolliver.

Miss Richards is now in her 75th year, and though obliged to walk with the help of a cane, is wonderfully like her old self. She responded to the toast, Pioneers, at the beautiful dinner given at the Hotel Brunswick, and was able to be taken over the hospital in a wheeled chair, to be present at the lectures and, for a few minutes, in the operating room. We had the good fortune to have taken a number of splendid photographs of Miss Richards, standing in the great central corridor of the hospital where she first demonstrated her wonderful executive and organizing ability. Miss Richards radiated happiness and enthusiasm on this occasion in a way that was most beautiful and inspiring. After all her long years of pioneer work for the establishment of training schools on a proper educational basis, in spite of obstacles, opposition and disappointments with which she, as well as all others, had to contend, she is, though no longer able to take active part in nursing affairs, optimistic for the future of our profession, believing in all that nurses are doing for higher standards of training which lead ultimately to better hospitals and to more efficient care of the sick, both in institutions and homes.

#### THE QUESTION OF MEMORIALS

It was our privilege to sit next to Miss Richards during the dinner and to hear her voluntarily express her views on the wisdom of continuing to establish funds as memorials to our pioneer workers. She has, at our request, put her thoughts into writing for our JOURNAL readers, as follows:

In the September JOURNAL, under the head of Editorial Comment, I find an item on Memorials and I notice that at the convention held at San Francisco in June last, the question of continuing to establish memorials for our deceased members was extensively discussed among members outside the meetings and the question, How can we commemorate by the establishment of funds all the pioneer nurses? was frequently asked, and I, who was not present at the convention to hear the discussion am led to ask, Why should funds continue to be established? The pioneer nurses are yearly dropping from the ranks and the constant establishment of new funds would soon lead to confusion and would, in time, become a serious tax upon nurses throughout the country. Are we sure that those who have passed away would wish memorials? There are some of the pioneers now living who would feel badly did they think that when they have gone from earth some of their friends would feel it a duty to start funds for memorials for them and that every now and again all nurses would be urged to contribute to these funds.

Pioneer nurses will live in the hearts of the members of our profession long years after they have passed away. We respect the feelings of those who wish to honor the departed pioneers by fitting memorials, but appreciation of their good work and influence for good, shown them while they are with us, would, I am sure,

mean far more to them than memorials after they have passed away. Some few of the early graduates have received honor; one by having a beautiful new nurses' home named for her; another by having a club composed of superintendents of training schools in New England named for her. This recognition, which is honor now, will, when they are no longer with us, become splendid memorials.

I sometimes wonder if we, in our zeal to raise funds for memorials for those who have gone, have forgotten to look about us to see if there are not some who, because of illness, have seemingly dropped from the ranks and with never a note of encouragement from sister nurses. I know of such a case, an early graduate of one of our oldest and best-known schools, who did excellent work in new training schools and in hospitals till compelled by illness to drop from the ranks and become a patient in a ward for incurables in one of our large hospitals. An occasional letter of cheer would mean much to her and a little financial aid would add much to her comfort. Let us by all means hold our departed members in grateful, loving memory, but let us not forget to minister to the suffering members who are still with us.

We have had one of the photographs taken at this time enlarged to portrait size, with a special view to its being framed and hung in nurses' homes and class rooms all over the country. No greater honor could be shown Miss Richards than, during her life time, to have the pupils in training schools in this country thus made familiar with the features of "America's First Trained Nurse." These portraits can be ordered from the Editor of the JOURNAL.

#### A NEW DEVELOPMENT IN SOCIAL WELFARE

Nurses engaged in different branches of social service are keenly alive to the importance of the establishment of dental clinics for children. Many cities have such clinics in connection with dental colleges and dispensaries, but no city had established a system which in any way filled the needs of the community until the completion, recently, of the Forsythe Dental Infirmary in Boston. This is a liberally endowed institution which aims to provide free dental service for all the children requiring it, in the city, and at the same time gives a training to a class of women dental assistants to be known as dental hygienists. In the first announcement for the training of young women over eighteen for this new field of work, the educational requirement is fixed as graduation from a high school giving a four-year course. This is interesting in view of the difficulties which nurses have had in attempting to fix educational standards for state registration. The period of study is for twelve months, for which there is a fee of \$50. There is also to be a department for regularly registered nurses for which there is to be a fee of \$25. The latter course, as we understand it, is to fit nurses of exceptional ability to fill the position of supervisor and teacher of the younger women who are to become dental hygienists.

The city of Rochester, New York, is about to establish a similar dental infirmary, made possible by the liberality of one of its citizens, George Eastman, aided by other public-spirited men. The building for this infirmary is about to be erected, and, after its completion it is intended that the institution shall serve the several purposes of caring for the teeth of all the school children of the city, of offering postgraduate work to young dentists, and of training dental hygienists. It is intended in Rochester to have the prophylactic work, which is, as we understand, to be chiefly in the hands of the dental hygienists, done in each public school building in an office fitted for the purpose.

#### CANDIDATES FOR NATIONAL OFFICE

The organization work of the profession is now in full force, state and local meetings are being held all over the country, plans for improved legislation are being considered in many places and, in spite of the war in Europe and claims of business depression in our own country, there is renewed enthusiasm in every direction in efforts for better standards. Very shortly organizations will be considering candidates for office for the coming year in our national association and we want to urge upon nurses everywhere the careful consideration of this matter. Too many times the making up of the national ticket is left to the executive committee of an organization or to a few of its members to decide. It is useless for members to find fault with the result of an election if they have shown no interest in the selection of candidates for office. We have always advocated a broad geographical representation on the boards of our three national societies, and in order to secure this the different states must put up their best women and then work for their election.

We see, year after year, in our national meetings, women who we know are doing splendid executive work in hospital positions or in the work of the state who, because of the immense numbers at such gatherings, do not become known to the assembly as a whole. Every state has a few such women and it is for the state association, aided by the local association, to put them forward. We have also repeatedly suggested the appointment of a number of the younger women to serve with the more experienced on boards and committees of every kind; the responsibility for the proper selection of all such candidates rests with the home center.

## PROGRESS OF STATE REGISTRATION

OHIO.—We have read with much interest the report of a meeting of the Ohio Hospital Association in which a discussion took place on the administration of the law for state registration of nurses, recently passed, which places such work under the Board of Medical Examiners and consequently in the control of the medical society of the state of Ohio. The secretary of the Board of Examiners has published a letter in *The Modern Hospital* in which he characterizes the conditions found in training schools of the state as if they were peculiar and more deplorable than in other parts of the country. As a matter of fact, the conditions described as existing in Ohio, with which the medical profession now has to cope, are exactly those which the nurse boards of examiners have met in every state in beginning the work of registration and it was because of the existence of such defects that the movement for state registration has been brought about all over the world.

It remains to be seen whether, with the medical profession back of it, the board responsible for the administration of the law in Ohio will be able to remedy the defects more quickly than nurses alone, with much medical opposition, have been able to do in other states.

## TRANSFER OF RED CROSS UNITS

We learn from Miss Delano that the Red Cross has now under consideration a proposition received from the German government to transfer the Red Cross units which have been on duty in Germany and Austria to Russia where they are to care for German prisoners. The German government offers to meet all the expense of this service and the majority of the nurses in both units have signified their willingness to go. They will probably be under the supervision of Miss Reutinger who has been in charge of the staff at Gleiwitz. There is a possibility that the Russian government may ask for a similar service for their prisoners in Germany, using our Russian units for this service. If it has been found possible to carry out this plan, the nurses who have been in Germany and Austria are probably already in Siberia.

No higher tribute has been paid to the service rendered by our Red Cross workers than this request from two warring countries for a continuance of their services for the benefit of prisoners in exile.